

President Clinton expressed appreciation for Romania's ongoing assistance on issues affecting the two countries' security, including participation in Dayton implementation efforts in Bosnia and offer to contribute to the post-UNPREDEP mission in FYR Macedonia as well as to other missions in the region. The two Presidents expressed their mutual concern over the situation in Kosovo and reiterated their determination to work together with other interested parties to promote a diplomatic resolution of this crisis.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on Signing the Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998

July 16, 1998

Today, I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 3130, the "Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998." My Administration has conducted an unprecedented campaign to increase parental responsibility to ensure that parents support their children. We have had many successes. Through tougher enforcement, we have collected a record \$13.4 billion in child support, an increase of 68 percent since 1992, with 1.4 million more families now receiving child support. In addition, we located one million delinquent parents during the first 9 months of using a new collection system that tracks parents across State lines—a system initiated as part of the 1996 welfare law, and first proposed by my Administration in 1994. On paternity establishment, which is often the crucial first step in child support cases, in 1997, a record 1.3 million paternities were established, two and a half times as many as in 1992. Last month, I signed the Deadbeat Parents Punishment Act of 1998, a law based on my Administration's 1996 proposal to crack down on egregious child support evaders by creating a new felony offense for those who flee across State lines to avoid supporting their children.

However, there is much more that we can and must do. H.R. 3130 will build on this progress and help ensure that parents give their children all the support they need and deserve. First, the new law puts in place ad-

ditional tough penalties for States that fail to automate their child support computer systems on time. Under this new law, States that fail to establish these State-wide systems face automatic and escalating penalties, ranging from 4 percent of Federal child support enforcement funds for the first year to 30 percent for the fifth year in which a State fails to meet national certification standards. Second, H.R. 3130 incorporates a proposal that my Administration sent to the Congress last year to reward States for their performance on a wide range of key child support goals, such as the number of paternity establishments and child support orders, rather than only on cost-effectiveness, as current law provides. Third, the law will make it easier for States to secure medical support for children in cases in which the non-custodial parent has private health coverage, by facilitating the creation of a medical support notice that all health plans will recognize.

Many members of Congress, Administration officials, State officials, experts, and children's advocates worked together constructively in a bipartisan fashion to craft this valuable piece of legislation, and I wish to thank them for their efforts. In particular, I would like to thank Representatives Levin and Shaw, and Senators Moynihan, Roth, Rockefeller, and Baucus.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
July 16, 1998.

NOTE: H.R. 3130, approved July 16, was assigned Public Law No. 105-200.

Statement on Senate Action on Food Safety Legislation

July 16, 1998

I welcome today's 66-33 vote to restore much needed funds to our food safety programs. Food safety should not be about politics; instead it must be about protecting our families and children. Today, the Senate put Americans first and partisanship last. With this money we will be able to improve safety inspections of foods, better educate the public on how to handle food safely, improve research, and aid the effort to track food

borne outbreaks such as salmonella and *E. coli*. We must continue to work together in the coming months on this issue and on the many other issues which the American people care about. The American people want action, not political wrangling.

**Statement on Action on Title III of
the Cuban Liberty and Democratic
Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996
July 16, 1998**

Today I am notifying the Congress of my decision to suspend for an additional 6 months the provision of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (LIBERTAD Act) allowing U.S. nationals to file suit against foreign firms trafficking in confiscated properties in Cuba. I have made this decision because of my strong commitment to implementing the Act in a way that best advances U.S. national interests and hastens a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba.

In January 1997 I said that I expected to continue suspending this provision of the Act so long as our friends and allies continue their stepped-up efforts to promote a democratic transition in Cuba. I made this decision to take advantage of the growing realization throughout the world, in Europe and Latin America especially, that Cuba must change. We and our allies agree on the importance of promoting democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms in Cuba, and over the past 2 years we have worked together to support concrete measures that promote peaceful change.

Events in the past 6 months reaffirm that international cooperation for Cuban democracy is increasing. The January visit of His Holiness John Paul II inspired the Cuban people and gave encouragement to the Cuban Catholic Church and Cuban advocates for democratic change. The Pope gave hope to the Cuban people when he called for greater freedom and respect for individual rights.

Building on the Pope's important visit, European Union (EU) member states have reiterated their commitment to democratic transition in Cuba and, in June, as a group reaffirmed their Common Position on Cuba,

committing them to take concrete steps toward that end. The EU has continued to urge Cuba to release imprisoned dissidents and stop harassing people who seek peaceful democratic change. The EU Working Group on Human Rights, formed last year among embassies in Havana, has met with Cuban dissidents. These are positive steps, and we encourage the EU to be even more active in their efforts.

On May 18, we and our EU allies reached the Understanding with Respect to Disciplines on Expropriated Property, a major advance in our efforts to protect property rights worldwide, including in Cuba. By discouraging investment in illegally expropriated property, the Understanding sends a strong signal that Cuba must follow the rule of law and respect fundamental rights. Of particular importance, the EU nations expressly acknowledged that the Cuban Government's expropriation of property from U.S. citizens appears to have been contrary to international law. We will work with the Congress to bring this important U.S.-EU understanding into effect.

Nations of the Americas are also working for democracy in Cuba. In the last 6 months, the Presidents of Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, and Nicaragua have restated calls for Cuba to begin a democratic transition. Brazil's foreign minister met with a leading dissident in Cuba and took the opportunity to voice strong support for human rights.

Government cooperation has been reinforced by the efforts of international non-governmental organizations (NGO's), which have increased support for dissidents and helped focus attention on Cuban Government repression. The Dutch group Pax Christi has reported on political and religious repression. Amnesty International has maintained pressure on Cuba to release members of the Dissident Working Group who were arrested in July 1997, and issued a special report on new cases of imprisonment for political offenses. The international effort to promote "best business practices" in Cuba is also advancing, with several NGO's developing a working group to encourage businesses to support fundamental rights.